

Message Text

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ACTION EA-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 NSC-07 PM-03 DRC-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 RSC-01 USIA-04 PRS-01 SP-02 /052 W

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R 101114Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1120

INFO DIA

JCS

CDR USSAG NKP

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 7742

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, LA

SUBJECT: MILITARY INCIDENT IN NORTHWEST LAOS

REF: STATE 222315

1. SERIES OF SMALL CLASHES OCCURRED IN HONGSA AREA (QB 450805) OVER PAST TWO WEEKS. WHILE THE EXACT CAUSES OF THESE CLASHES REMAIN UNCERTAIN, THIS INCIDENT APPEARS RELATED TO THE POSSIBLE ARRIVAL OF A MIXED MOBILE TEAM FROM THE JOINT CENTRAL COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT (JCCIA) WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO PLACE A BOUNDARY "STAKE" DELINEATING THE TWO SIDES' POSITIONS IN THE AREA. UNDER THIS ASSUMPTION, THE CLASHES REPRESENT PL PRESSURE TO ENSURE THAT THE "STAKE" IS PLANTED AS FAR SOUTH OF THE RIVER AS POSSIBLE. PL HAVE ALREADY PURSUED THIS TACTIC AT OTHER POINTS WHERE THE LOCATIONS OF BOUNDARY MARKERS WERE AT ISSUE.

2. INCIDENT BEGAN ON SEPTEMBER 25 WHEN BATTALION-SIZE PL UNIT LAUNCHED ATTACKS ON FAR POSITIONS EAST AND NORTH OF HONGSA, CAPTURING THREE POSITIONS. ANOTHER POSITION WAS TAKEN ON SEPTEMBER 29. FAR POSITIONS IN HONGSA VILLAGE ALSO RECEIVED MORTAR FIRE. FAR BEGAN TO REACT ON SEPTEMBER 26 AND BY SEPTEMBER

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28 HAD AIRLIFTED TROOPS FROM XIENG LOM TO HONGSA.

LOGISTICS PROBLEMS HINDERED FAR FOR SEVERAL DAYS BUT OPERATIONS GOT UNDER WAY BY OCTOBER 2 AND WERE ENDED OCTOBER 8 WITH FAR IN CONTROL OF FORMER POSITIONS. LPF MOVED BACK TO TWO NEW POSITIONS NORTH OF FAR LINES, WITH BOTH SIDES AWAITING MIXED MOBILE TEAM FROM JCCIA.

3. FAR EMPLOYED T-28S IN 3 SORTIES ON SEPTEMBER 29, WITH UNCERTAIN RESULTS. AIRCRAFT ORDNANCE WAS IN POOR CONDITION AND ONLY 2 OF 10 BOMBS EXPLODED ON IMPACT. IT TOOK SEVERAL DAYS FOR FAR TO WORK UP ITS LOGISTICS SYSTEM TO PROVIDE THE BOMBS, AMMUNITION AND POL. BY CONTRAST AIRLIFT OF FAR REINFORCEMENTS INTO HONGSA WAS BEST-ORGANIZED AND BEST-IMPLEMENTED PART OF OPERATION.

4. FAR CLAIMS 54 ENEMY KIA AND 89 WIA OVER PERIOD SEPTEMBER 26 - OCTOBER 8, BUT THIS IS CLEARLY A GROSS EXAGGERATION. FAR LOSSES WERE 3 KIA AND 8 WIA. CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, APPARENTLY THE RESULT OF PATHET LAO ABFS, WERE 3 KILLED AND 5 WOUNDED.

5. COMMENT: THESE CLASHES WERE LIMITED AND ISOLATED. FAR POSITIONS WERE UNDERMANNED AND TROOPS UNMOTIVATED. POSITIONS WERE NOT OVERWHELMED BY ENEMY HORDES; RATHER, PL FIRED A FEW SHOTS AND DEFENDERS WITHDREW. LPF MAY AGAIN ATTEMPT ENCROACHMENTS SUCH AS THIS AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST IN AREAS WHERE BOUNDARY STAKES ARE AT ISSUE PRIOR TO ARRIVAL OF MIXED MOBILE TEAMS. WHITEHOUSE

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